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Creating Job Opportunities for Veterans and Their Spouses

The Board of Supervisors has adopted a new hiring policy that opens up thousands of job opportunities for military veterans and their spouses at Los Angeles County construction projects.

Acting on a motion by Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas and Michael Antonovich, the Board approved a Local Worker Hiring Program policy that sets aside a portion of the labor on construction projects for veterans and their spouses.

“Veterans deserve all that we can reasonably do to ensure that they can support themselves and their families,” Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said.

“Our returning veterans deserve our gratitude and our assistance in transitioning to civilian employment,” added Supervisor Antonovich.

Under the policy, the County’s contractors must demonstrate a “good faith” effort to hire veterans and their spouses to complete at least 5 percent of the construction hours for projects worth less than \$2.5 million, as well as for all job order contracts.

To be eligible, veterans must have received an honorable or general discharge, or retired from any branch of the Armed Forces. They must also be residents of the County.

The Board is still deciding whether to make it mandatory for the County’s contractors to employ at least some veterans and their spouses for projects valued at more than \$2.5 million. It asked experts to report on the economic impact such a policy might have.

Supervisor Kuehl emphasized the new policy would benefit not only veterans but their spouses. “That’s important because it’s not always clear, especially for those veterans who have been seriously injured, whether they could be the sole providers for their families.”

Veterans have historically found it difficult to reenter the workforce after serving their country. A 2014 report from the USC School of Social Work found eight out of 10 service members leave the military without a job, and at least 40% leave without having identified permanent housing.

A 2015 report from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs found veterans have an 8 percent higher unemployment rate when compared to non-veterans. It also found more than half of veterans experience unemployment upon separation from service.

Currently, an estimated 4,300 veterans are homeless in the County.

Keith Jeffreys, executive director of the nonprofit United States Veterans’ Artists Alliance, expressed gratitude for the new policy, calling it “a spectacular effort.”

“This... creates a level playing field for veterans, and gives them a leg up to make up for time that they have lost,” he said.

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